

was not corrected until teeth were unearthed" (see *Western Australian Naturalist*, vol. 1, No. 5, 1948, p. 100).

When the character of the find was realised a return to the site of the original discovery was planned. The trip was made on May 15 by a small party from the University and although the gully was searched thoroughly new specimens were only discovered in the original locality in the same facies. This is a soil containing weathered greensand and fragments of *Inoceramus*. It appears that the specimen was included in the soil through landslips and soil creep as it is impossible that the jaw is contemporaneous in age with the Lower Greensands against which it was found.

The relics found on the second visit included two phalanges, a complete and damaged vertebra and other indefinite fragments. In view of these findings it is not improbable that more fragments may be revealed in a thorough search and another visit is planned. Later a fuller account of the field occurrence will be presented.

—A. MAIN, Perth.

**The Instincts of Argentine Ants.**—Anyone with experience of Argentine Ants (*Iridomyrmex humilis*) is aware of the difficulty of exterminating them. The effect of various poison baits and other toxicants is so variable and inexplicable from our point of view, that there seems no rule to go by and one can only continue empiric experiments.

This is probably due to our ignorance of the physiology, instincts and social behaviour of the insects. In my own experience, arsenical bait placed in a tin on one trail was completely effective, while a similar tin of poison on another trail had no effect whatever; the ants walked over the lid, but did not enter the holes.

Seeking an explanation, the following hypothesis occurred to me. When the ants are travelling between the nest and a known source of food supply, they go straight ahead and ignore anything on the way. But when they are foraging, they wander about and will try anything edible they can find.

The following experience is interesting, but hard to explain. On Bassendean railway station, I had observed the ants continuously using a well-worn path for several months. One morning I had with me a dust gun loaded with a preparation of benzene hexachloride, and I puffed the powder along a yard or more of the trail, which caused the ants to disperse. The next morning, just 24 hours later, I carefully examined the trail and could not find a single ant anywhere near the treated portion. Naturally, I considered the remedy was completely successful. But while I was watching, one ant appeared and reached the trail at right angles. It turned and followed the worn path. In a few seconds, many ants came from all directions, and the trail was in full use again.

These questions arise: (1) Why did the effect of the toxicant last for 24 hours and then apparently cease suddenly? (2) Did

the ant find the trail accidentally? (3) How did it know that the trail, although poisoned, was worth following? (4) How did the other ants know that the trail was in use again? There was no possibility of the first ant having communicated with the others, because there was not time for it to have reached the nest, and the ants came from both sides of the trail almost immediately, and not, as far as I could detect, from any side trails.

—C. B. PALMER, Bassendean.

**Straw-necked Ibis Breeding at Coolup.**—On May 14, 1949, I decided to investigate a report that the Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskiornis spinicollis*) had bred in large numbers on a swamp about 12 miles south-west of Coolup. I was accompanied by Dr. D. L. Serventy and Mr. Angus Robinson, while Bill Davis, a son of my informant, acted as a guide. The swamp was situated between Lake Mealup and the southern shore of Peel Inlet and is locally known as Tuekey's Swamp or the Greenland Duck Pool.

We approached the swamp from the north-east through dense undergrowth, into a dried-up reed-bed. On the south-western side of the reed-bed we came into a thicket of tea-tree (*Melaleuca lamulosa*) in which were hundreds of nests from about four to six feet off the ground. During the breeding season these trees would be standing in water as proved by the aerial roots some 12 inches or more above the ground. Here and there on the fringe of the thicket were open spaces with odd stunted paper-barks (*Melaleuca parviflora*), which were also full of nests up to 10 feet from the ground. On examination of some of the many hundreds of nests, many of which had been used last season, we found the remains of several young birds. Most of these could be identified as Little Pied Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*) and it was quite obvious that in a number of cases well-grown young had died in the nests. There were also odd Little Black Cormorants (*P. sulcirostris*) but we found no sign of any remains which could positively be identified as those of Straw-necked Ibis. Bill Davis said, however, that the only time he had seen the nesting colony was in September 1947 and at that time the Ibis were nesting in company with the Cormorants. If the Ibis had not nested there since most of the remains would have disappeared.

After careful search among the broken egg-shells in some old nests we picked up two pieces which were compared by Dr. Serventy and Mr. Robinson with eggs of the White Ibis (*T. aethiopica*) in Mr. Robinson's collection. The fragments we found could be superimposed perfectly on these eggs, proving that the original eggs must have been similar in form and size. There was similarity also in texture. There was little doubt the fragments were portions of Straw-necked Ibis eggs.

Many of the nests which had been in use in 1948 were notable for the mulberry colour of the ordure on their sides and the remains of jilgies and crabs inside. All remains of young birds